

THE REPUBLIC.

SPEECH

OF THE

HON. R. C. WINTHROP, OF MASS.

On the President's Message, transmitting the

Constitution of California; delivered in the

Committee of the Whole in the House of Repre-

sentatives of the United States, May 8, 1850.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on

the state of the Union, on the President's Message

transmitting the Constitution of California.

Mr. WINTHROP said: When I had the honor of

addressing the Committee of the Whole on the state

of the Union some weeks ago, I intimated my purpose

to take another opportunity, as to-day, to say a

few words on the subject of the Constitution of California.

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the appointment of only two officers—a governor

and a judge—who were to have absolute authority

to promulgate and enforce, throughout the Territory

of Oregon, any and all laws which they might see

fit to select from the statutes of any State or Territory

in the Union. The whole doctrine of Oregon

was that it was to be a Territory of two men,

who were to make up a code of laws to suit

themselves, by picking and culling at pleasure from

all the statute books of the country. They were at

liberty, as the bill stood—although the entire Terri-

tory was above the latitude of 36° 30'—to adopt a

slave code or a free code, as might be most agree-

able to their own notions; and there was, at that

very moment, lying upon the table before us, a

report from the Indian agent or sub-agent in that

quarter, from which it appeared, that a number of

the native Indians had already been captured and

enslaved by the white settlers, and that they were

held in a state of absolute and unjustifiable

bondage.

It was under these circumstances, Mr. Chair-

man, that I moved the proviso in question; and I

trust that a speech printed at that time, the

remarks which I made on the occasion.

One limitation upon the discretion of these two

trespassing law-givers ought certainly to be im-

posed. If this bill, as it now stands, is to be

nothing to prevent them from legalizing the ex-

istence of domestic slavery in Oregon. It seems to

me that the single one which I have cited, by

the terms of the Missouri compromise, and is

nowhere to be permitted in the American Union

to legalize the slaveholding territory of the

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word about peace. Not a word about Mexico. Not

a syllable about the disputed boundaries of the Rio